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Thailand

Retail Food Sector

Report

2001

Approved by:

David Kiefner U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:

PACRIM Associates Limited

Report Highlights:

Multinational retailers have dominated Thailand's modern food retail market with continued aggressive store expansion in 2000-2001. In the first half of 2001, multinational hypermarket and discount stores added 1000,000 square meters of new retail space, compared with 70,000 in the same period in 2000. The retail food sector grew by 1.6% in 1999, 4.9% in 2000, and approximately 5% in 2001.

Section I. Market Summary

Multinational retailers have dominated Thailand's modern food retail market with continued aggressive store expansion in 2000-2001, especially in the hypermarket segment. There are currently over 100 supermarkets, 3,500 convenience stores and gas marts, 97 hypermarkets and discount stores, 270,000 traditional grocery stores and around 564,000 wet markets in Thailand.

Urban Thai consumers, resident expatriates and tourists prefer supermarkets, cash and carry, hypermarkets and discount stores to traditional 'Mom and Pop' grocery stores. The increased popularity of this segment is mainly due to their location in easy to reach prime areas, plentiful parking space, well displayed items, product freshness and relatively low prices. About 20-30 percent of imported foodstuffs are sold through this segment.

In the first half of 2001, multinational hypermarket and discount stores added 100,000 square meters of new retail space, compared with 70,000 in the same period in 2000. Big C (France) and Tesco Lotus (UK) accounted for 95 percent of the growth. Carrefour (France) will have spent USD 44 million on opening of new outlets by the end of 2001. Cash and carry chain, Siam Makro (The Netherlands), has added about 150,000 square meters of new retail space in the past four years. At least 10 more hypermarkets and discount stores are planned for 2002. The number of hypermarkets in Thailand is projected to reach 131 in 2003. Tesco Lotus is likely to continue to lead the way with 45 stores, followed by Big C with 39, Makro 24 and Carrefour 23. The hypermarket segment is estimated to be valued at almost USD three billion in 2001, a 13 percent increase from 2000. The overall growth rate is expected at around 20 percent in 2001 due to rapid expansion of branch networks.

In 2000-2001 supermarkets expanded modestly with an overall sales growth of around five percent. This is as a result of the competition from hypermarkets and discount stores. Tops, the largest supermarket chain, added three outlets while Food Lion also opened three stores adding around 10,000 square meters of space. To encourage consumer spending at supermarkets, operators are seeking new types of alliances. For example, the US oil firm Conoco has joined with CRC Ahold (Thailand), the operator of Tops supermarkets, to offer logistics services for dry groceries to Jiffy convenience stores at 120 Jet service stations.

Convenience stores experienced an overall increase of around six percent in food sales with stable growth rate of around ten percent. The largest convenience store chain, CP 7-Eleven, maintains its growth rate of 200 new stores a year adding to its existing 1720 outlets. Its competitor, Siam Family Mart, will add 70 outlets to its current 100 outlets by end of 2001. Very few imported foodstuffs are sold in this segment. In their place, locally produced U.S. branded snack foods and U.S. and Japanese style snack foods (potato chips, dried cuttlefish) are the best selling items in this sector.

Whilst hypermarket and discount stores have spurred over 20 percent expansion of selling space, the overall sales have remained stable. Thailand's food retail sales are expected to grow at the same rate of five percent in 2001 as in 2000. The unfavorable economic conditions including falling interest rates, declining consumer income and the lowering of economic growth projections for 2001 to less than two percent, from 4.3 percent in 2000 are factors contributing to the sluggish growth.

With much of the prime retail space in central Bangkok now taken, the expansion trend is to the outskirts of the capital as well as in the larger provinces. Retailers are also turning to other type of food retail outlets. Tesco Lotus, the country's largest hypermarket operator, plans to open a number of 'Tesco Lotus Express' supermarkets in co-operation with Esso (Thailand). These stores will be located at Esso service stations. Big C Supercentre also plans 'Leader Price', a chain of smaller stand-alone supermarkets. Both of these chains will be operated from early 2002.

We assess that supermarkets, superstores and hypermarkets are the best method of entry for U.S. exporters to take to enter Thailand's retail food market. Large convenience store chains like CP 7-Eleven are recommended for selected foodstuffs. U.S. exporters can contact the chain directly or through importers/distributors of food products. The main factors U.S. exporters should consider for U.S. food products are pricing, shelf life of the product and customer preference. The traditional 'Mom and Pop' stores and wet markets in Thailand are not an ideal entry level for U.S. exporters considering price sensitivity and preference for a traditional diet by end consumers in this sector.

Table Of Overall Retail Food Sales Over The Past Five YearsUSD million

Description	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001P
Total overall retail food sales	20,508	17,799	14,559	14,792	15,511	16,287
rood sales	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)
Growth rate	10%	-13.21%	-18.20%	1.6%	4.9%	5.0%
Supermarkets, Superstores,	4,349	3,775	3,087	3,254	3,878	7,329
•	(21%)	(21%)	(21%)	(22%)	(25%)	(45%)
Convenience Stores,	708	614	503	888	775	814
Gas Marts, Kiosks	(4%)	(4%)	(4%)	(6%)	(5%)	(5%)
Traditional Markets	15,451 (75%)	13,410 (75%)	10,969 (75%)	10,650 (72%)	10,858 (70%)	8,144 (50%)

Sources: Bank of Thailand, Thai Farmers Bank, NESDB, Bangkok Post, The Nation, Food Chain Asia, Pacrim

interviews and Pacrim retail surveys. Note: 1999 and 2000 data in this table has been updated from the data appearing in Thailand Food Sector 2000.

Table Of Imported Versus Domestic Food Products Over The Past Five YearsUSD million

Description	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001P
Total value of domestic food products	26,446	23,019	18,981	30,520	28,067	27,643
Total value of imported food	1,647	1,363	963	1,063	1,114	1,267
imported 100d	(@ THB 26)	(@ THB 32)	(@ THB 42)	(@ THB 38)	(@ THB 42)	(@ THB 44)
Total food and b e v e r a g e consumption	28,093	24,382	19,944	31,500	29,173	28,910

Sources: Bank of Thailand, NESDB and Thai Customs Department. Note: 1999 and 2000 data in this table has been updated from the data appearing in Thailand Food Sector 2000.

U.S. exporters should be aware that many U.S. branded food products such as snack foods, candy, chocolate and breakfast cereals are present in the market as locally produced food products. The ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) is one of the major factors contributing to shift in manufacturing bases.

Most of the supermarkets, superstores and hypermarkets in Thailand have their own food brands for ready-to-eat food, ready-to-cook prepared foods, home-made bakery items, TV dinners, sausages, water, cooking oil, rice, sauces, cereals, dairy products and fruit juice. These outlets also provide space for fast food outlets, kiosks, a laundry, a florist, bookstores, a photographic store, movie rental stores and restaurants. They also have their own distribution centres to ensure product freshness and operation efficiency.

Advantages and Challenges

Advantages	A	dv	an	ta	ges	
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Challenges

Of 63 million Thai consumers, about ten percent can afford imported foodstuffs and are aware of U.S. brands, taste profiles and quality.

Depreciation of the Thai Baht, other regional currencies and high oil prices has increased the retail price of U.S. food products more than that of imported foods from other countries.

Thais view U.S. products as being of high quality and safe.

Local manufacturers can improve or change quality of products, tastes or packaging sizes according to changes in consumer behaviour and can lower production cost.

The growing retail industry is looking for new imported food products.

Lack of importer and retailer knowledge and training in purchasing and handling of U.S. food products.

High quality U.S. style foodstuffs are not presently produced in Thailand.

That people prefer to buy good quality food, but are price conscious.

Vast varieties of high quality U.S. products.

Negative perception of Thai NGOs against U.S. biotechnology and genetically engineered seeds.

Niche market with high profit and super premium price.

The difference in Thai taste preference. Only certain groups of people are U.S. brand consumers.

Thai life style in Bangkok and major cities has become less focussed on a traditional diet.

More varieties of imported foodstuffs from other countries and greater competition from third country suppliers.

Section II. Road Map For Market Entry

A. Supermarkets, Superstores, Hypermarkets, Supercenters, Cash-and-Carry Outlets

Entry Strategy

The best method for U.S. exporters to sell to supermarkets, discount stores, hypermarkets or cash and carry is to directly contact supermarkets, discount stores, hypermarkets, and cash and carry who import direct, importers and distributors. U.S. exporters should be aware that many multinational retailers in Thailand charge listing fees or a listing allowance for new products. The fee will be charged in accordance with a formula based on the number of retail outlets and SKU (stock keeping unit).

Distribution Channels

The distribution channel to supermarkets, superstores and hypermarkets in Thailand normally begins from importers to distributors to a central warehouse or direct to retail outlets. The foodstuffs will be kept either in the importers' warehouse, distributors' warehouse or central warehouse before delivery. Some supermarkets, superstores and hypermarkets operated by multinational operators import food products directly and keep them at their own distribution centres before delivery to each outlet.

U.S. Exporters	U.S. Trader	Thai Importer	Thai Distributor
	Retail Ce Warehou Depot	· ·	Supermarkets, Supercenters, Wholesale outlets

The above diagram is indicative and varies between chains. The principal and manufacturer can also deliver food directly to their distributor.

Company Profiles

Retailer Name And Outlet Type	Ownership (Legal Entity)	Food Sales (\$ Mil)	No. of Outlets	Locations (city/region)	Purchasing Agent Type
SHV Makro, Cash- and-carry	The Netherlands	796 (2002P)	20	Bangkok and major cities	Importer Distributor Manufacturer
Big C, Supercenter (Casino Group)	France	852 (2002P)	29	Bangkok and major cities	Importer Direct Distributor Manufacturer
Lotus, Supercenter (Tesco Group)	UK	909 (2002P)	33	Bangkok and major cities	Importer Direct Distributor Manufacturer
Tops, Supermarket (CRC Ahold)	The Netherlands	273 (2001P)	44	Bangkok and major cities	Importer Distributor Manufacturer
Carrefour, Hypermarket	France	341 (2002P)	15	Bangkok and major cities	Importer Direct Distributor Manufacturer
Home Fresh Mart, Hypermarket	Thai	173 (2001P)	8	Bangkok, Nakorn Rachasima	Importer Distributor Manufacturer
Siam Jusco, Supermarket	Japan	96 (2001P)	10	Bangkok	Importer Direct Distributor Manufacturer
Foodland, Supermarket	Thai	71 (2001P)	8	Bangkok, Pattaya	Importer Distributor Manufacturer
Tang Hua Seng, Supermarket	Thai	39 (2001P)	2	Bangkok	Importer Distributor Manufacturer

Food Lion, Supermarket (Delhaize Le Lion)	Belgium	55 (2001P)	28	Bangkok, Uttaradit	Importer Distributor Manufacturer
Villa, Supermarket	Thai	18 (2001P)	7	Bangkok	Importer Distributor Manufacturer
Others	Thai	983 (2001P)	334	Bangkok and all cities nationwide	Distributor Manufacturer

Sources: Pacrim interviews with company management, The Bangkok Post, The Nation.

The value of imported food is projected to increase 19 percent in 2001 even with the Baht devaluation, high oil prices and negative consumer sentiment. Food imports into Thailand are expected to increase. High import taxes and a less than transparent FDA approval process are government instruments for protecting local manufacturers.

The Thai FDA has recently put in a new procedure to shorten the registration process to two weeks versus four to six months. The new procedure only applied to certain imported food in specific types of packaging when accompanied with a GMP certificate. Examples of U.S. food that qualify under the new procedure are seasoning, sauce, beer, fresh and frozen seafood and biscuits. U.S. exporters are advised to verify in advance if their products qualify under this new rule as the Thai FDA is very particular on the verification of products under this new procedure.

B. Convenience Stores, Gas Marts, Kiosks

Entry Strategy

The best method for U.S. exporters to enter this Thai market segment is to contact the head office of convenience stores, gas marts and kiosks. The major convenience stores like CP 7-Eleven, AM/PM and Siam Familymart are listed at the end of this report. U.S. exporters should be aware of the listing fee or listing allowance that may be charged by large convenience store chains. The fee will be charged in accordance with a formula based on the number of outlets and SKU.

Distribution Channels

U.S. Exporters	U.S. Traders	Thai Distributors	C-Stores, kiosk warehouse	
			C-Stores, kiosk outlets	

The above diagram is indicative and varies between chains. A common distribution channel to convenience stores, gas marts and kiosks flows from U.S. exporters to U.S. consolidators and traders to Thai distributors to C-stores, gas marts and kiosk distribution centres. Some Thai distributors distribute foodstuffs directly to C-stores, gas marts and kiosk outlets. Most of the foodstuffs that are distributed directly to the outlets are fresh, including baked goods and dairy products. The flow pattern of different retailers varies depending on the sales volume and number of outlets. A key ingredient in the success of the larger retailers is control of their own distribution centers.

Company Profiles

Retailer Name and Market Type	Ownership (Legal Entity)	Food Sales (\$ Mil)	No. of Outlets	Location (City/ region)	Purchasing Agent Type
CP 7-Eleven, Convenience	Thai	409 (2001P)	1720	Bangkok, all major cities	Distributor Manufacturer
AM/PM, Convenience	Thai	22 (2001P)	280	Bangkok, major cities and n a t i o n a l highways	Distributor Manufacturer
Siam Familymart, Convenience	Japan	13 (2001P)	170	Bangkok	Wholesale Distributor Manufacturer
Star Mart, Caltex Convenience (Caltex)	USA	10 (2001P)	354	Bangkok, major cities and national highways	Distributor Manufacturer

Tiger Mart, Convenience (Esso)	Thai	15 (2001P)	350	Bangkok, major cities and main highways	Distributor Manufacturer
Select, Convenience (Shell)	Thai	3.3 (2001P)	110	Bangkok, major cities and main highways	Distributor Manufacturer
Q8 Shop, Convenience	Thai	2.4 (2001P)	95	Bangkok, major cities and main highways	Distributor Manufacturer
Lemon Green, Convenience	Thai	2.1 (2001P)	120	Bangkok, major cities, main highways	Distributor Manufacturer
PTT mart, gas mart	Thai	2.0 (2001P)	120	Bangkok, major cities and main highways	Distributor Manufacturer
Jiffy Jet Convenience (Conoco)	U.S.	60 (2001P)	120	M a j o r highways and B a n g k o k suburbs	Importer Distributor Manufacturer
Others	Thai	155 (2001P)	900	Bangkok and all cities	Distributors Manufacturer

Sources: Pacrim interviews with company management, The Bangkok Post, The Nation.

Most of the gas stations in Thailand also operate convenience stores or gas marts. Some of the gas stations have turned into giant food courts or food plazas for travellers along the main highways of Thailand.

The market leader in this segment is 7-Eleven. 7-Eleven experienced over ten percent growth in 2001 due mainly to fast expansion of its outlets nation wide and the higher purchasing power of the younger generation. Each outlet earned over USD 1,000 daily countrywide. Some convenience stores such as

Shell Select has developed new features in order to include western style fast food outlets like McDonalds to attract those target groups.

Most food sold in convenience stores in Thailand is locally produced, with liquor a notable exception.

U.S. branded food sold in these C-stores is generally produced in Thailand or in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. This group of products includes snack foods, chocolates, cookies, candies, gums and breakfast cereal. Distributors import U.S. branded food from neighbouring countries rather than from the United States because of the low cost and AFTA preferential tariffs. Trends in the sales of imported food for C-stores versus locally produced will decrease gradually from five to zero percent, in line with the purchasing power of the target group. U.S. products will be well received by Thai consumers in C-stores if price and quality is similar to what local suppliers offer.

C. Traditional Markets

'Mom and Pop', small independent grocery stores and wet markets.

Entry Strategy

For U.S. exporters, Thai traditional wet markets are more difficult markets to enter considering the expected purchase price of products, low consumer purchasing power, the size and traditional distribution channels of the outlets and consumer preference for traditional Thai and Chinese food.

Distribution Channels

Rural agriculturists, local producers and local manufacturers	Middlemen, Traders	Urban and rural distributors	Urban and rural wet markets, small independent grocery stores
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The above distribution diagram is indicative of a standard distribution pattern for agricultural and food products in Thailand to urban and rural wet markets and small independent grocery stores. Usually local manufacturers will have their own distributors to distribute their products. While some local producers are under supervision of a Royal Project in which the distribution is managed by assigned distributors.

Sub-Sector Profile

Traditional Market Owners	hip Food Sales	Number Location	Purchasing
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		(\$ Mil) (2001f)	Of stores		Agent Type
'Mom & Pop'	Local	3,300	270,000	Bangkok and all cities, provincial and district capitals, and villages	Distributor Manufacturer
Wet Market	Local	6,780	564,000	Bangkok and all cities, provincial and district capitals, and villages	Distributor Producer

Sources: Pacrim interviews and Pacrim retail surveys, The Bangkok Post, The Nation

Thailand has been an agricultural based country for centuries. The present population is almost 63 million. Even though a small but influential percentage of the population have been exposed to western concepts and systems, a large proportion of the total population are considered poor with a low level of education. The traditional wet markets and 'Mom and Pop' independent grocery stores will still exist in residential areas throughout the country. The existence of wet markets in urban areas will eventually decline due to the expansion of the supermarkets, superstores, hypermarkets, convenience stores and kiosks. Whilst the number of stores and wet markets in rural areas increases along with the number of local households, the market for imported food in this sector is not likely to exist as consumers in this sector lack purchasing power and exposure to non-traditional foods. Consumers in major cities and urban areas will continue to have more purchasing power and will turn to shop at supermarkets, superstores, hypermarkets, convenience stores and kiosks rather than at traditional stores and wet markets.

Section III. Competition

Current situation in the Thai market.

Domestic products have played a major role in the Thai market because the cost is perceived to be cheaper than imported foodstuffs. However, imported foods do relatively well in Bangkok (especially at locations near higher income families, resident expatriates and tourists) and other major cities such as Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Surat Thani, Had Yai, Petchburi, Ratchaburi, Phuket and Samui island. The ratio of imported food versus domestic food is 30:70. The United States holds

approximately 15 percent of the overall imported foods market.

Imports of U.S. branded products have decreased over time because U.S. investors have shifted manufacturing bases from the United States to Thailand or neighbouring countries such as Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia. The advantages of AFTA, lower labour costs and the relative value of regional currencies versus the U.S. dollar has made these companies more competitive in Thailand. In addition, lower production and transportation costs have made these U.S. branded products more competitive in Thailand.

The advantage of imported foodstuffs versus locally produced food is that these products could not currently be produced or manufactured in Thailand and the quality is perceived as better than local products. The obvious disadvantage is the price of imported food. Local manufacturers understand local customers' needs and can improve or change quality of product, taste or packaging size to suit customer preference.

The advantage of U.S. products versus other foreign products is the fact that several high quality products could not be produced or manufactured in other foreign countries. The disadvantages are pricing, delivery time and customer preference.

Section IV. Best Product Prospects

Products That Are Present in the Market.

Product Categories

American spices, seasonings and sauces, fresh and frozen sea food (lobster, crab, crawfish, fish), beer, biscuits, breakfast cereal, canned foods, (fruit, soup and vegetables), candy, chocolate, chocolate milk mix, cola, corned beef, corn oil, dairy products (milk powder, cheese, cheese spread, cream cheese, whipped cream, sour cream, cheese sticks, cheese dip and ice-cream), dips, fresh fruit and vegetables (radish, celery, carrots, apples, grapes, cherries, kiwi fruit, avocados, blueberries, grapefruit, oranges), frozen cake, frozen peas, fruit juices (apple juice, prune juice, orange juice, grape juice, sparking white grape juice), instant coffee, jam, macaroni and cheese dinners, mayonnaise, Mexican sauce, nuts (peanuts, walnuts, hazel nuts, macadamia nuts), peanut butter jelly, pet food, pie filling, micro wave pop-corn, poultry, preserved or dried fruits, pickles, prunes, raisin, rice (paddy, long grain and short grain), ready-to-mix pancakes, cookies, muffins and cake, red meat, snack foods, syrup, tortilla chip, TV dinners, vinegar, wine and whisky.

The best selling U.S. food products are snack foods, breakfast cereal and nutritional products.

B. Products Not Present in Market in Significant Quantities but Which Have Good Sales Potential.

American seafood including lobster, crab, crawfish and fish, avocado, beverages, biscuits, candy, grapes, cherries, chocolate milk mix, cooking oil, cream cheese, dip sauce, chilli sauce, kiwi fruits, Mexican sauce, other cooking products, peanut butter jelly, pie filling, TV dinners, sour cream, U.S. beef and whipped cream.

C. Products That Will Not Do Well or Cannot Be Used in the Market.

None.

Section IV. Post Contact and Further Information

Siam Makro Company Limited 3498 2nd Fl., Lard Prao Rd Klongchan, Bangkapi Bangkok 10240, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 7047000, 3757000 ext. 1401

Fax. +66 2 3758866

Contact person: Mr Philip Cox, Food Director

Big C Supercenter Co., Ltd Fl 7 Univest Building 89/36 Rajadamri Road Lumpini, Pathumwan Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 6550666

Fax. +66 2 6555801-2, 2517260

Contact person: Mr Yves Braibant, CEO Mr Atthapon Uraipriwan, Marketing Director

Ek-chai distribution System Co., Ltd (Lotus Supercenter)

Modernform Tower

1000 Moo 16

Srinakrarin Rd, Suanluang

Bangkok 10250, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 7229640

Fax. +66 2 7229637

Contact person: Mr Mike Raycraft, CEO

CRC Ahold Co., Ltd (Tops Supermarket)

139 Ratchadapisek Rd

Dindaeng, Huaykwang

Bangkok 10320, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 9371700 ext. 712

Fax. +66 2 9371711

Contact person: Mr Randy Guttery, COO

Cen Car Ltd (Carrefour Merchandise)

14th Fl, Q-House Bldg

11 Sathorn Tai Rd

Thungmahamek, Sathorn

Bangkok 10120, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 6773399 ext. 129

Fax. +66 2 6773354-55

Contact person: Mr Suchaiwut Suphapteeranon, Fresh Division Head

The Mall Group (The Mall)

1988/2 Ramkhamhaeng Road

Huamark, Bangkapi

Bangkok 10240, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 3101000, 3188925

Fax. +66 2 3156605, 3188923

Contact person: Mr Surat Ampooch, President

Siam Jusco / Max Valu

129 Ratchdapisek Rd

Dindaeng, Bangkok 10320, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 6422401-8

Fax. +66 2 6422427-8

Contact person: Mr Takachi Takani, Managing Director

Foodland Supermarket Co., Ltd

2675 Lard Prao 95

Wangthonglarng, Bangkok 10310, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 9322948

Fax. +66 2 5390837

Contact person: Mr Supamit Surongsain, Asst. Vice President Marketing

Tang Hua Seng Department Store

179 Sirinthorn Rd

Bangbamru, Bangplad

Bangkok 10700, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 4340448

Fax. +66 2 4346057

Contact person: Mr Viroj Chunprathipthong, Managing Director

Bell Thai Supermarket Co., Ltd (Food Lion)

(Delhaize Le Lion)

2nd Fl, Moo1, Srinakarin Road

Nongborn, Praves

Bangkok 10260, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 7215580-98 ext. 2101

Fax. +66 2 7213399

Contact person: Mr Wiwat Awasiripong, Executive Director

Mr Michel Prie, General Manager

Mr Denis Knoops, Executive Director for Asia of Delhaize The Lion Pacific

Villa Market JP Co., Ltd

591/1, 4-5 Sukhumvit Rd

Klongton, Klongtoey

Bangkok10110, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 6620372-6

Fax. +66 2 2591077

Contact person: Mr Surapong Poosanakhom, Managing Director

CP 7-Eleven Co., Ltd

313 CP Tower, 29th Fl

Silom Rd, Bangkok 10500, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 6310231 ext. 1633

Fax. +66 2 6311446

Contact person: Mr Piyawat Thitasathavorakul, Managing Director

World Phone Shop Co., Ltd (AM/PM)

3rd Fl Bordin Bldg.,

391/1-23 Soi Ladplao 94

Ladplao Rd, Wangthonglang

Bangkok 10240, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 9356901-10 ext. 301, 209

Fax. +66 2 9345032

Contact person: Mr Puripat Sudsawangwong, Managing Director

Siam Familymart

139 Robinson Building

5th Fl Ratchdapisek Rd

Dindaeng, Bangkok 10320, Thailand

Tel. +66 2 6423519-28

Fax. +66 2 6413873

Contact person: Mr Minoru Endo, Managing Director

Jiffy Jet Convenience

Conoco (Thailand) Co. Ltd 11 Samakee Prakanpai Building North Park Project 2/4 Vipavadi Rd Laksi, Bangkok 10210 Tel. +66 2 9550195

Fax. +66 2 9550190

Contact person: Mr Randal Fralix, President and Managing Director